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20th District
Budget Report



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20th District
Budget Report



Dear Friends,

Just a few days ago I had the pleasure of attending the grand opening of the new educational facility at Centralia Community College. Walking through the building with hundreds of students and local citizens, I felt the sense of hope for the future. This outstanding facility will allow numerous opportunities for people seeking an education in business, communications and technology. It will also be a much-needed meeting place for civic events and performances.

The construction of this building was funded through a partnership of government and private contributions. The government portion of \$14.5 million was appropriated by the state's Capital Budget Committee, of which I serve as co-chairman.

This project, along with many others, is part of a \$2.5 billion Capital Budget plan that provides money for the construction and repair of public buildings and other long-term investments. I worked hard to build a consensus in this difficult year of split government and the Capital Budget passed with bipartisan support.

Shortly before the grand opening, Gov. Gary Locke put a freeze — or as his staff called it a 'pause' — on all Capital Budget projects. This left many projects unfinished and unfunded. One week later, the governor issued a directive to six of the largest state agencies to prepare to cut 15 percent of their budgets.

I agree that the Legislature and governor must be proactive in responding to the economic difficulties facing this state. The terrorist attacks on our country affected each and every American and we all must do our part to revive the economy. **But, this economic downturn did not begin on Sept. 11. Many if us were concerned about the lack of fiscal responsibility in the \$22.8 billion General Fund budget when we adjourned in July.**

Our role as your elected leaders must be to lead the charge of rebuilding the economy, not turn true investments in our state must into political pawns. **I am committed to working in a nonpartisan fashion and intend to convince my fellow lawmakers that is the best policy.**

I look forward to hearing and reading your thoughts on these topics.

Gary C. Alexander



The Capitol Building in Olympia

Although it funds many other projects, the Capital Budget also includes funding to renovate the domed Legislative Building in Olympia. This historic structure was crumbling even before February's devastating earthquake. Its aging ventilation, heating and cooling systems must be repaired to provide a safe environment for the thousands of school children and tourists who visit each year. It's important to move forward with this project now to take advantage of the Federal Emergency Management Agency funding to repair the earthquake damage.

Including the funding in the 2001-03 budget will allow us to move forward as quickly as possible to protect a building that remains one of our state's treasures. This bipartisan plan to remodel the Capitol will require vacating the building a portion of 2002 and 2003. After its reopening, I intend to host a number of "District Days" and tours for residents, as the remodel will make this jewel of a building more accessible for all citizens.

Capital Budget:

An Investment in the 20th District and Washington

K-12 and Higher Education

As a combination of small, rural communities, we could all benefit from a diversified Capital Budget that recognizes the value of investments to meet local needs. From the preschool education programs through community college and higher education, the Capital Budget emphasizes safe, dependable facilities. Prior to the governor's freeze, improvements were planned for a new seminar building at The Evergreen State College and a new family education center and childcare facility at South Puget Sound Community College. Major upgrades and renovations were also scheduled for the New Market Skills Center, serving Lewis and Thurston counties.

The Operating and Capital Budgets provide an opportunity for 20th District residents and those in surrounding communities to seek an education of their choice, retrain for a new career, or simply enrich their lives. Each of us have different needs and we must maintain educational facilities to meet those needs.

Hopefully, we will secure funding to meet the needs of all our local, voter-approved school bonds and move forward with the critical capital investments in our local colleges and universities. We've made wise spending decisions over the past few years and I'm excited we can use this funding to make life in the 20th District a bit more enjoyable for everyone.

Investments in Our Environments and Economy

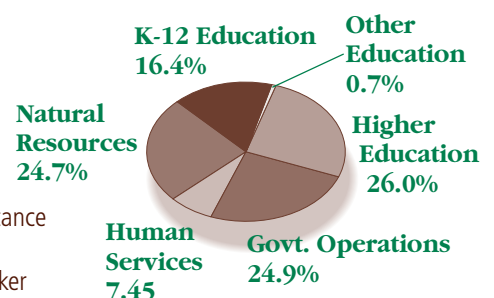
While education takes up 60 percent of our Operating Budget and 41 percent of our Capital Budget, we have made other investments that will affect the local community. Funds were included for improvements to natural resources and parks, including a major expansion of the Napavine city park and the "Rails to Trails" project in Thurston County. We have also planned to develop the Nisqually Delta Interpretive Center, the next phase of Heritage Park, an expansion of the Hands-On Children's Museum, restoration of the historic sites in Morton and local salmon recovery efforts.

Social services and public safety improvements are planned for Green Hill School in Chehalis and Maple Lane School in the Rochester area. Plus, tens of millions of dollars will be directed toward local community water, wastewater and transportation projects. While it may seem like a small amount of the total, I was able to secure \$3 million for local jail improvements in communities that have approved a sales tax increase for criminal justice projects.

While the current state of our economy and budget call for prudent action, we should not lose sight of the fact that capital budget projects are investments – investments that can save taxpayer dollars in the future and put people to work today. Each and every one of us has a stake in the outcome. Your input and comments help ensure the 20th District has a strong voice. I appreciate hearing from you.

The \$2.5 billion budget includes:

- \$263 million for community and technical colleges;
- \$3 million for local jails;
- \$183 million to preserve forests, acquire and restore parks and promote conservation;
- \$78 million for housing (\$65 million in housing assistance for the developmentally disabled, self-help programs, and victims of domestic violence, \$8 million farmworker housing, and \$5 million for homeless families with children);
- \$229 million to improve water resources (including \$49.5 million for clean water efforts and \$8 million in irrigation efficiencies); and
- \$54.6 million for salmon recovery efforts



The General Fund Budget: Operating Our State

Adopted less than four months ago, the \$22.8 billion general fund budget spent \$667 million more than the state expected to take in, according to the June economic forecast. Now, based on the state's September revenue forecast, that gap has increased to \$761 million in spending beyond expected revenues. Analysts have predicted a \$1 billion shortfall with only \$460 million remaining in the state's emergency reserve fund, \$390 million of which is restricted. At this rate of spending, the state general fund stands to be almost \$3 billion short for the entire 2003-05 budget cycle.

I refused to vote for the budget in July. When you authorize spending \$667 million more than you take in, you are setting yourself up for major problems. We will return to the Capitol in January with a potential \$1 billion shortfall and with a "rainy day" fund of only \$66 million – only 2/10th of 1 percent of the total budget. Each of us, Republican and Democrat, must realize it's time to take off the blinders, roll up our sleeves and build a budget that lives within our means.